

Mobile Unit Partnership Reaches Out to Those at Highest Risk for Stroke

Issue

The American Stroke Association estimates that someone dies of a stroke every three minutes in America. South Carolina sits in the heart of the stroke belt. Residents of Darlington and Marlboro Counties live in the buckle of this stroke belt. These communities exhibit a disproportionate prevalence of social, economic, education, and health risk factors compared to South Carolina and the nation as a whole.

Compared to the state's age-adjusted death rate (per 100,000) of 59, the rate for African-Americans in Darlington County was 100 (per 100,000) in 2005. For Marlboro County, it was 51 (per 100,000) for African-Americans the same year. Both counties have higher risk factors for hypertension, heart diseases, smoking, sedentary lifestyles, and overweight, than the state's averages.

Intervention

CareSouth Carolina, Inc., with established community health centers in both counties, received a grant from the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health to focus on decreasing the disparities, prevalence, and death rates of stroke in African-Americans in these two counties. A Stroke Mobile group was formed to review programs and develop intervention methods to better stroke outcomes. The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Controls Region 4, through funding from its Division of Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention, is collaborating with CareSouth Carolina, the American Heart Association (AHA), the University of South Carolina School of Medicine and community faith-based organizations. This partnership was formed to utilize the AHA Search Your Heart program, as well as the American Stroke Association's Power to End Stroke campaign, to complement the Stroke Mobile Unit, which provides stroke screenings within the African-American community. The following steps have taken place:

- The Stroke Mobile group is in the process of recruiting its partner faith-based organizations, which will then participate in pre- and post-stroke screenings, referrals to health care providers as necessary, and a series of health education sessions provided by health outreach teams;
- Classes are designed to not only inform participants about stroke and risk factors, but also to give them tools to prevent having a stroke or a repeat stroke; and
- Two vans were purchased for the health outreach teams to use when traveling to community groups and conducting on-site health education and screening programs.

Impact

This is a three-year grant and the program will be expanded every year. It is expected that through this program, African-Americans in Darlington and Marlboro Counties will be more aware of their risk factors, signs, and symptoms of stroke and will be better able to act quickly in the event of a stroke. With increased awareness, it is anticipated that less stroke deaths will occur in the participating communities.

Contact:

Sara M. Price, Chronic Disease Health Educator
S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control – Region 4
1705 West Evans Street, Florence, SC 29501
843/661-4728; 843/317-4044 (fax) pricesm@dhec.sc.gov